

Message Text

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ORIGIN NEA-07

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TO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 139633

LIMDIS USIAEA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TA : TECH, IN

SUBJECT: MEETING ON NUCLEAR MATTERS WITH INDIAN FOREIGN
SECRETARY

1. SUMMARY: DEPUTY UNDERSECRETARY NYE REVIEWED U.S. NUCLEAR
POLICY IN DETAIL WITH INDIAN FOREIGN SECRETARY MEHTA IN LON-
DON JUNE 10. NYE STRESSED OUR HOPE THAT INDIA WOULD JOIN
THE INTERNATIONAL FUEL CYCLE EVALUATION PROGRAM, ACCEPT FULL
SCOPE SAFEGUARDS AND ADHERE TO A POSSIBLE CTB. NYE EMPHA-
SIZED THAT U.S. SAFEGUARD PROPOSALS WERE NON-DISCRIMINATORY
AND WOULD NOT IMPAIR INDIAN NUCLEAR POWER DEVELOPMENT. WHILE
MEHTA MADE NO COMMITMENTS, HE WAS FRIENDLY, APPEARED OPEN-
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MINDED, AND OBVIOUSLY PLEASED THAT THE TARAPUR FUEL LICENSE
HAD BEEN RECOMMENDED. HE REITERATED DESAI'S STRONG OPPOSI-
TION TO NUCLEAR WEAPONS, WHICH NYE SAID WAS WELCOME MUSIC TO
AMERICAN EARS. MEHTA INVITED NYE TO VISIT INDIA TO EXPLAIN
U.S. PROPOSALS TO INDIAN NUCLEAR TECHNICAL AND POLICY PEOPLE
AND NYE AGREED IN PRINCIPLE TO COME AT A MUTUALLY SUITABLE
TIME THIS SUMMER. END SUMMARY.

2. NYE OUTLINED THE OVERALL U.S. APPROACH BEFORE DEALING

WITH SPECIFIC INDIA/TARAPUR QUESTIONS. HE EXPLAINED THAT IN A VARIETY OF WAYS PRESIDENT CARTER WAS SEEKING TO REDUCE IN STAGES THE PROSPECTS FOR NUCLEAR WARFARE. NUCLEAR FORCE

REDUCTIONS AND CTB WERE ONE APPROACH. ANOTHER WAS THE EFFORT THROUGH THE INTERNATIONAL FUEL CYCLE EVALUATION PROGRAM (INFCEP) TO MAINTAIN THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN CIVIL AND MILITARY NUCLEAR PROGRAMS. AS TECHNOLOGY ADVANCED, THE U.S. FEARED THAT WE WERE ENTERING AN ERA WHERE SAFEGUARDS, WHICH WERE ESSENTIALLY A BURGLAR ALARM SYSTEM, WOULD PROVE LESS EFFECTIVE. THE WIDESPREAD USE OF REPROCESSING TECHNOLOGY, ORIGINALLY DESIGNED IN THE 1940'S AS AN EFFICIENT BOMB MAKER, WOULD DRASTICALLY REDUCE THE WARNING TIME AGAINST POSSIBLE DIVERSION OF MATERIAL FROM CIVILIAN TO MILITARY USES. THE U.S. WANTED INFCEP TO PROVIDE A VEHICLE FOR SCIENTISTS AND TECHNICAL SPECIALISTS TO STUDY PROCESSES WHICH MIGHT BE MORE PROLIFERATION RESISTANT WHILE PROMOTING NUCLEAR POWER AND OTHER PEACEFUL USES, AND TO ASSESS AT THE POLICY LEVEL WHAT INSTITUTIONAL CHANGES MIGHT BE DESIRABLE TO ASSURE EFFECTIVE SAFEGUARDS.

3. ONE PART OF THE APPROACH, NYE EXPLAINED, WAS THE LONDON SUPPLIERS GROUP BUT THIS TENDED TO GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF THE RICH GANGING UP ON THE POOR. THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION WANTED TO AVOID THIS. IT WANTED THE SOUTH IN INFCEP TO PREVENT A NORTH/SOUTH NUCLEAR SPLIT. FOR THIS REASON INDIA WAS ON THE LIST OF INFCEP INVITEES FROM THE START. WE

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LOOKED TO AN ORGANIZING CONFERENCE, POSSIBLY IN SEPTEMBER, ATTENDED BY ABOUT 30 COUNTRIES. WE HOPED INDIA WOULD PARTICIPATE, NOTING THAT INFCEP SEEMED FULLY CONSISTENT WITH THE INDIAN NUCLEAR APPROACH AS WE UNDERSTOOD THIS. INDEED WE WANTED INDIA TO SERVE ON THE TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE WHICH WOULD STEER INFCEP'S PROGRAM.

4. MEHTA STRESSED THAT DESAI'S VIEW ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS WAS CATEGORICAL. HE WAS ABSOLUTELY OPPOSED AND EVEN IF INDIA WERE THREATENED WITH NUCLEAR WEAPONS HE WOULD NOT DEVELOP THEM. NYE COMMENTED THAT DESAI'S POSITION WAS OF GREAT HELP TO THOSE IN THE U.S. WHO WANTED A COOPERATIVE SOLUTION TO OUR BILATERAL NUCLEAR PROBLEMS. WHILE NOTING SOME IN THE U.S. FAVORED A PUNITIVE APPROACH TOWARD INDIA, NYE COMMENTED THAT THE PRESIDENT FAVORED THE COOPERATIVE ROAD. IN THIS CONTEXT, NYE ADDED THAT "IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT A SECOND EXPLOSION WOULD SINK THE COOPERATIVE STRATEGY."

5. TURNING TO INDO-U.S. BILATERAL NUCLEAR NEGOTIATIONS, NYE EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT WE COULD FOCUS ON THE FOREST, THE BIG NON-PROLIFERATION PICTURE, AND NOT GET LOST IN THE

TREES THROUGH SCORING LEGAL POINTS OFF ONE ANOTHER. MEHTA SAID THAT HE FULLY AGREED. NYE NOTED THAT OUR NEW LEGISLATION WOULD PROBABLY REQUIRE THAT CONTINUED NUCLEAR COOPERATION INVOLVE INDIAN ACCEPTANCE OF SOME FORM OF FULL SAFEGUARDS ON CIVIL FACILITIES. WE WOULD NEED NEGOTIATIONS ALTHOUGH PERHAPS THESE WOULD NOT REQUIRE A RENEGOTIATION OF THE TARAPUR AGREEMENT AS SUCH. THE LEGISLATION PROPOSED BY THE ADMINISTRATION WAS SOMEWHAT MORE FLEXIBLE THAN SOME CONGRESSIONAL PROPOSALS BUT EITHER WAY WE NEEDED TO NEGOTIATE COMPREHENSIVE SAFEGUARDS. IF SUCCESSFUL, THIS COULD OPEN THE POSSIBILITY OF EXPANDED INDO-U.S. NUCLEAR COOPERATION. IF NOT, WE WOULD BE CAUGHT BY THE REQUIREMENTS OF NEW U.S. LEGISLATION. IN RESPONSE TO MEHTA'S QUESTION ABOUT HOW MUCH TIME WE HAD, NYE SAID THE ADMINISTRATION
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PROPOSAL ONLY WAS TO "SEEK" FULL SAFEGUARDS WITH NO FIXED DEADLINE. CONGRESSIONAL PROPOSALS SPOKE OF ABOUT 18 MONTH.. AS A PRACTICAL MATTER, NYE THOUGHT THERE WAS PERHAPS A YEAR OR TWO AVAILABLE TO WORK THINGS OUT.

6. IN RESPONSE TO FURTHER QUESTIONS BY MEHTA, NYE STRESSED THAT (1) OUR APPROACH APPLIED TO ALL COUNTRIES NOT JUST INDIA AND (2) THAT FEARS ABOUT TECHNOLOGICAL ESPIONAGE AND COMMERCIAL DISADVANTAGE AS A RESULT OF SAFEGUARDS HAD PROVEN EXAGGERATED. EXPERIENCE HAD ALLAYED CONCERNS ON THIS SCORE AND SHOWN THAT THE SAFEGUARD SYSTEM AS WAS INTENDED FUNCTIONED LIKE A BURGLAR ALARM SYSTEM.

7. MEHTA ASKED HOW THE U.S. APPROACH WOULD AFFECT THE REPROCESSING PLANT AT TARAPUR. INDIA HAD INVESTED IN THIS PROGRAM AND WHAT COULD THEY DO. THERE WOULD BE A "TREMENDOUS" REACTION IN INDIA IF IT SEEMED THE PEACEFUL NUCLEAR PROGRAM WAS SLOWED DOWN BECAUSE OF THE U.S. NYE NOTED THAT THE PRESENT STANDARD REPROCESSING PLANT SUCH AS THAT AT TARAPUR WAS DEVELOPED AT A TIME WHEN THERE WAS LESS CONCERN ABOUT THE PROLIFERATION RISK. WE WERE LOOKING FOR SAFER WAYS OF REPROCESSING IN INFCEP. IN THE MEANWHILE, WE WERE STOPPING OUR OWN DOMESTIC REPROCESSING PROGRAM AT BARNWELL, SOUTH CAROLINA EVEN THOUGH THIS WOULD IDLE A FACILITY IN WHICH WE HAD INVESTED \$300 MILLION. WE DID NOT THINK THE TARAPUR PLANT WAS SAFEGUARDABLE IN THE BROADER MEANING OF THE CONCEPT AND COULD NOT AGREE TO REPROCESSING OF U.S. FUEL THERE. POSSIBLY TECHNICAL ADAPTIONS TO MAKE THE PLANT LESS OF A PROLIFERATION RISK MIGHT ALTER OUR VIEW. MEHTA ASKED IF THIS WAS A NON-DISCRIMINATORY APPROACH. NYE SAID IT WAS, NOTING THAT WE HAD AN ALMOST IDENTICAL REPROCESSING PROBLEM WITH JAPAN.

8. MEHTA ASKED IF FULL SAFEGUARDS WOULD COVER RESEARCH AS WELL AS POWER FACILITIES. NYE SAID THEY WOULD IF THE

FACILITIES USED SENSITIVE MATERIAL. THIS WAS THE KEY SINCE
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THE SAFEGUARD "BURGLAR" ALARM WAS DESIGNED TO PREVENT MISUSE
OF SENSITIVE CIVIL NUCLEAR MATERIAL.

9. MEHTA ASKED ABOUT HOW THE SUPPLIERS GROUP AND INFCEP
WOULD RELATE TO THE IAEA. NYE EXPLAINED THAT WE SAW THEM
IN A SUPPORTING ROLE AND VIEWED THE IAEA AS THE CENTER-
PIECE OF THE NON-PROLIFERATION SYSTEM.

10. MEHTA SAID IT WOULD BE VERY USEFUL IF NYE COULD VISIT
INDIA TO EXPLAIN OUR APPROACH. THIS, HE FELT, WOULD HELP
IN ALLEVIATING APPREHENSIONS OR PERHAPS MISAPPREHENSIONS.
PRIME MINISTER DESAI WAS DEAD SET AGAINST NUCLEAR WEAPONS
BUT INDIA WOULD HAVE TO JUDGE HOW THE NEW U.S. APPROACH
AFFECTED THEIR PEACEFUL POWER PROGRAM. THEY WOULD WANT TO
SEE THE IMPACT ON INDIAN SCIENTIFIC/TECHNOLOGICAL INDEPEN-
DENCE.

11. MEHTA ASKED IF WE STILL PUSH THEIR ADHERENCE TO THE
NPT, WHICH RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY, WOULD BE POLITICALLY VERY
DIFFICULT GIVEN INDIA'S LONG STANDING OPPOSITION. NYE SAID
WHILE WE REGARDED INDIAN ADHERENCE TO THE NPT AS VERY
DESIRABLE, WE RECOGNIZED IT WAS UNLIKELY AND DID NOT
REQUIRE THIS UNDER THE NEW POLICY.

12. NYE FILLED MEHTA IN ON UPCOMING DISCUSSIONS ON A
COMPREHENSIVE TEST BAN TREATY. HE SAID THAT IT WOULD
GREATLY HELP THE PRESIDENT'S EFFORT TO MOVE AWAY FROM THE
NUCLEAR WEAPONS PATH WERE INDIA TO JOIN. FRANCE AND CHINA
WERE UNLIKELY TO JOIN BUT IF THE U.S., U.K., USSR, AND
INDIA AGREED TO BAN TESTING THIS WOULD BE AN ENORMOUS STEP.
MEHTA MADE NO SUBSTANTIVE COMMENT.

13. RE VISITING INDIA, NYE SAID HE WAS AGREEABLE IN PRIN-
CIPLE TO COME SOMETIME THIS SUMMER, PERHAPS IN CONNECTION
WITH A LATE JULY OR EARLY AUGUST VISIT TO AUSTRALIA. MEHTA
AND NYE SAID THEY WOULD BE IN TOUCH ABOUT POSSIBLE VISIT
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DATES SHORTLY. NYE SAID HE HOPED THE VISIT COULD BE INFOR-
MAL AND ALLOW TALKS WITH SETHNA AS WELL AS POLICY PEOPLE
IN DELHI. MEHTA SAID THIS WOULD BE CONSISTENT WITH HIS
VIEW. HE THOUGHT THAT QUIET TALKS OUT OF THE LIMELIGHT
WOULD REDUCE POSSIBLE POLITICAL PRESSURES FROM THE OPPOSI-
TION.

14. COMMENTS: WHILE MEHTA MADE NO COMMITMENT ON U.S. PROPOSALS, HIS ATTITUDE WAS OPEN, FRIENDLY AND NOT DEFENSIVE. THE POSITIVE USG RECOMMENDATION ON THE TARAPUR LICENSE, DESAI'S FORTHRIGHT STANCE AGAINST NUCLEAR WEAPONS, HIS INTEREST IN PROMOTING NON-PROLIFERATION AND THE GENERAL IMPROVEMENT IN BILATERAL RELATIONS ALL SEEMED TO BE FACTORS IN WHAT STRUCK US AS AN ALTERED INDIAN ATTITUDE. MEHTA, AS EXPECTED, MADE CLEAR THAT THE INDIANS WERE POLITICALLY UNABLE TO ACCEPT THE NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY, BUT IN

CONTRAST ON FULL SCOPE SAFEGUARDS HE MERELY ASKED QUESTION, BY IMPLICATION NOT RULING OUT POSSIBLE INDIAN ACCEPTANCE. THE QUESTIONS REFLECTED INDIAN CONCERNS ABOUT BEING PARTY TO A "DISCRIMINATORY" ARRANGEMENT OR ONE WHICH MIGHT INHIBIT THEIR USE OF NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT OF POWER PURPOSES. BASED ON AMBASSADOR GOHEEN'S TALKS IN DELHI AND THE LONDON SESSION, OUR TASK WOULD NOW APPEAR TO BE ONE OF PERSUADING THE INDIANS THAT ACCEPTANCE OF COMPREHENSIVE SAFEGUARDS WOULD INDEED BE CONSISTENT WITH DESAI'S APPROACH TO NON-PROLIFERATION. CHRISTOPHER

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